CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR EMOTIONS DURING AND AFTER FAMILY DISPUTES:

An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates children's understanding of their emotions during and at the end of a dispute with another family member. Three vignettes were read out aloud to 92 children (46 six year olds and 46 ten year olds, equally divided by sex). Each of the three vignettes consisted of a conflict encounter between the target child (with whom the two age groups could identify with) and a family member. The children were asked to imagine how they would feel in that particular situation and were posed questions designed to assess the intensity, duration, simultaneity, expression/inhibition of their emotions. The following was found. Conflicts are characterized by short intense negative emotions during the dispute and long intense positive emotion following the dispute. There was no relationship between the intensity and duration of an emotion. Children preferred not to express negative emotions during conflict and had difficulty in explaining why they couldn't express an emotion. There appeared to be strong social and personal processes bearing on children's expression or inhibition of emotion. Finally, a more complex array of emotions was felt towards the other participant than towards the issue of conflict and the topic of conflict. The results are further discussed with reference to the practical implication of verbalization of emotion for individual and family mental health, also the important role of emotion regulation within a theory of emotional development.

INTRODUCTION

The development of children's emotion and its role in social behaviour has recently become a focus of interest by developmental psychologists. Until approximately the 1970's however, emotions suffered neglect by Psychologists. Emotions appeared to be unamenable to measurement with any degree of specificity, they seemed to play no causal role in behavioural explanations and were much too closely linked to naive, romaticized and unscientific language (Campos & Barrett 1984). Developmental Psychology, however, was a noteworthy exception to the neglect of emotion. Campos & Barrett (1984) note that from the 1940's through the 1960's, there was an abundance of studies of social smiling, anaclitic depression, stranger anxiety, separation anxiety and other similar phenomena. It would seem however, that the motivation for conducting such studies was to use emotions to index something else - usually a cognitive process.

Lewis (1985) states that almost all current measures of children's developmental status are based on cognitive variables and challenges the assumption that by increasing the cognitive abilities of children, we are ensuring later success and happiness in life. He suggests that in order to understand development, research must move away from the preoccupation with cognitive variables and redirect attention to emotional development. Only then and in combination with cognitive and social measures can we then have some understanding of the developmental process.

Recently, developmental psychologists have become aware that we currently possess very few data about children's emotional development, especially after infancy (Hesse & Cicchetti 1982). There has been a recent proliferation of emotion research conducted with infants, as attested by recent volumes on emotion measurement and related developments in infancy. Information about the course of emotional development during middle childhood is particularly lacking (see Hesse & Cicchetti 1982).

Previous research within emotion has tended to measure or index a feeling state. Research now, is beginning to explore the communicative impact of emotions, for example, how a subject's feeling state or individual behaviour impacts the perception, thoughts or behaviour of that person or others. That is, emotions are a subject matter of interpersonal communication (Izard, Kagan & Zajonc 1984). However, what has been studied most extensively in the communication of emotion has been the receiving aspect, that is, the ability of perceivers to recognize and identify emotion states or their ability to empathize. But there is another side to the communication of emotion and that is the side of the communicator. During the course of development children gradually acquire a sense of when and when not to express their feelings openly, and this is accompanied by a corresponding tendency to conceal emotion when it is appropriate to do so by social, cultural or personal convention. Emotion expression may well be under severe social control but emotion itself is a means of social control that is seen over and over again in our everyday encounters.

Children's ability to accurately perceive or infer the emotional reactions of others and how others might respond to their overt displays of emotion can be seen clearly in 'conflict' interactions with significant others in their lives. It is of great educational relevance to know the emotional load placed on children while in conflict with significant others and what

strategies children use to cope in these situations. Rivalry and conflict among families are common problems that affect many contemporary families. Despite the fact that dissension and conflict among siblings is one of the most common and persistent problems facing families today, very little has been written regarding the conceptualization or resolution of this problem (Kelly & Main 1979). While there has been a proliferation of conflict research among peers and siblings, very little work has focused on emotions during and after conflict between peers or within the family.

The purpose of the present research was to fill this gap in our knowledge at least with respect to children's strategies of coping within a family conflict situation and provide a broad investigation into emotions during conflict. The research was designed to assess the intensity, duration and simultaneity of emotions during and after conflict, as well as the reasons and the consequences for the expression and inhibition of emotion. The research was concerned particularly, with assessing emotions within a developmental context - comparing middle childhood to children nearing the end of childhood. At present very little normative data exists concerning the affective nature of conflicts with this age children and their family.

Following, is the theoretical perspective that guides the present research and the emotion and conflict literature to date that supports and leads to the rationale for undertaking this study.

Theoretical Perspective

At the general level there are two opposing models of emotional development. Firstly, the biological approach, views emotional behaviour as adaptive where no distinction is made between emotional state and

emotional experience. This model rests on the idea that to begin with emotion is only associated with physiological need, for example, the infant cries when it is hungry or cold. The alternative model is based on socialization, with emotional development occurring through the establishment of linkages based in learning (Strongman 1987).

Emotional development clearly depends on an interaction between genetic and environmental influences. However, more recent investigations (for example, Izard & Malatesta 1984) stress the importance of social interaction to the initial development of emotions (Strongman 1987). Strongman points out that if it is to be accepted that emotional development is heavily dependent upon social interaction then it follows that it is also linked to cognition and cognitive development. Lewis (1985) also argues that when discussing emotional development, one should recognize that the distinction between emotional, cognitive or social development can be quite arbitrary. This conclusion is strongly reinforced by Izard and Malatesta's (1984) theory of emotional development.

Izard and Malatesta's (1984) developmental theory of emotion consists of a series of twelve postulates with supporting evidence, all of which are based on the assumption "that the emotions form a system which is independent of, but interrelated with, life-support, behavioural and cognitive systems" (Strongman 1987 p. 150). The twelve postulates fall into three categories: The first three postulates are neurophysiological, the next three postulates concern the expressive component of emotion and the remaining six postulates fall within the domain of emotional experience. This recent and comprehensive developmental theory of emotion guided the present research. The postulates of critical concern fall within the expressive component and in the domain of emotional experience. Izard and Malatesta's (1984) theory was integrated with various developmental and emotion research in the present formulations:

Firstly, emotion expressions begin mainly as reflexive movements and shift to expressive behaviour based on enculturation and learning.

Secondly, the regulation of emotion expression serves important personal and social functions.

Thirdly, the development of emotion labeling and emotion symbolization represent major forces in growth.

Fourthly, there is an invariance of a given emotion feeling over the lifespan and a continuity of emotion feelings in consciousness.

Finally, there is a development in children's understanding of the simultaneity of conflicting emotions.

Emotion Expression (Based on Enculturation and Learning)

Emotion expressions begin mainly as reflexive movements closely connected with state changes. Gradually, however, these expressions undergo modulation, first as operants responsive to shaping, and later as instrumental behaviours. Izard and Malatesta state that "once neuromuscular maturation is complete, and in concert with maturing cognitive abilities, emotions become increasingly subject to control" (p. 20). Spontaneous expressions can be voluntarily or intentionally regulated based upon socially defined contexts for emotions and emotion display rules. Display rules (as symbolic nonverbal behaviour), involve cognitive processing and reflect experiences and learning about self, social, cultural and gender constructs (Strayer 1985). "Display rules are those unspoken but tacit "norms" that govern the degree and manner of concealment of our emotions in particular circumstances" (Malatesta 1982 p. 3).

Children's knowledge and use of display rules show developmental progression. According to 6 to 10 year olds, most reasons for hiding emotions (emotion dissimulation) are to avoid trouble and preserve self-

esteem (Saarni 1979). Saarni (1979) examined how children come to understand that internally experienced affect need not be behaviourally experienced and that the emotion that is expressed is not necessarily what is being felt internally. Especially with children of increasing age, that is 10 years and above. It is likely that 6 and 8 year olds (the younger children) also have the competence to understand this differentiation, but it is not as accessible to them for performance or articulation as for the older children. Saarni is one of the few to investigate the issue of 'how to express emotion' developmentally. Saarni (1979) found an increase over age, in children's application of display rules in various personal stress situations and in their explanations about why emotional behaviour should be managed or displayed in certain ways. For example, 10 year olds exceeded the 6 and 8 year olds in number of spontaneously given display rules, complexity of reasoning, and use of norm maintenance as a reason for using a display rule. This research however, addressed children's knowledge about, not their use of display rules. Saarni (1980,1982) then examined the developmental changes in the spontaneous use of display rules and deception in children between 6 and 11 years of age. Deception was shown by 50% of the 6 year olds, and 70% of the children older than 6 years used deception. Thus by 6 years many children have already learned the rule "how to express emotions". (Substitution is the strategy preferred by young children when they are asked how they would deceive someone about their feelings).

Hence, during the course of development children gradually acquire a sense of when and when not to express their feelings (Saarni 1979), and this is accompanied by a corresponding tendency to conceal emotion when it is appropriate to do so by social convention (Saarni 1982). With age children's conception of emotion also changes. Children are more likely to recognize that an overt behaviour display may not match one's internal emotional experience. As children acquire and refine information about their own

affective experiences, they also learn to take account of how others might respond to their overt displays of these experiences (Strayer 1985). Children also gradually acquire the ability to voluntarily *enact* or mimic reasonable facsimiles of emotion expressions, and by late childhood their abilities are about as good as those of adults (Odom & Lemond, 1972). With increasing cognitive complexity and socialization, children learn to monitor or regulate their expressive affective behavioural displays according to social conventions. Therefore, children not only know, but show an increasing use of display rules with age and improve in their abilities to mask or control negative affect.

Izard and Malatesta (1984) stress that emotion dissimulation/expression or conformance with social conventions (regarding emotion control) may be particularly important during young and middle adulthood. This is when close and frequent interactions with a variety of other adults in important work and family-related matters call for minimizing the chances of interpersonal friction. This assumption is of particular importance because of the frequent conflict demonstrated among the families of today.

The Regulation of Emotion Expression Serves Important Personal and Social Functions

The ability to modify emotion expression is extremely important for both self-management of feeling and as a means of promoting harmonious social interactions. Izard & Malatesta (1984) hypothesize that regulation of expressions contributes to the regulation of feeling states as well. They propose that the role of expression in the activation and regulation of emotion could led to the possibility that the socialization or cultural shaping of emotion experiences is important to the shaping of emotion experiences

and of the emotional life in general. However, "how and to what extent learned modifications in expressions and expressive behaviour styles affect social, cognitive, and personality development are important problems for future research" (Izard & Malatesta 1984 p. 30).

Emotion expressions are extremely important interpersonally as motivators of social behaviour. Emotion expressions can exert a powerful influence on feeling and behaviour. Through contagion and empathy, approach and avoidance behaviours are displayed in interpersonal exchange. It is of no wonder that people learn to control their emotional expression. There is an obvious need to suppress or transform some types of emotions, for example, negative in order to avoid hostility or escalation of feelings. However, it is adaptive to be able to express some emotions to keep interpersonal harmony. The reasons for expression or inhibition of emotion expression is of particular concern in the present investigation.

Labeling and Symbolizing Emotions

As children learn to comprehend language and understand labels for emotions, further social influence is exerted. "As the child's capacity for memory, images, and abstract thinking matures developmentally, language becomes an increasingly powerful tool for evoking remote emotion processes--emotional events that are anticipated and those that have taken place in the past" (Izard & Malatesta 1984 p. 42). Izard and Malatesta believe that explicit verbal controls begin to diminish during adolescence, but that nonverbal messages remain as potent controls on expressive behaviour throughout life.

Izard and Malatesta (1984) note that the process of adding language to the already existing nonverbal communication system is of monumental importance in human development. Eventually the child who was once

capable only of experiencing a given emotion directly as a feeling becomes capable of symbolizing that feeling in consciousness, with or without that particular feeling being present. It is indeed a landmark in emotional development when feeling and thoughts about feeling can exist in consciousness simultaneously. The child can have one feeling in consciousness while dealing with others symbolically. Izard and Malatesta stress that this is of great consequence for the development of emotion regulation, empathy, and prosocial behaviour.

As children mature they learn an increasingly differentiated vocabulary for describing their emotional states. Both the range and richness of emotional experiences shift with age, and accompanying these changes is an increasing ability to accurately label and describe one's emotions.

Knowledge of how children acquire and use affect terms may be of some importance in understanding the structure of children's emotional experience for example, a child's acquisition of emotion labels seems particularly relevant for their identification of their own subjective experiences, as well as for their understanding of and empathy for other's emotions (Strayer 1985). Although studies on children's acquisition of language are numerous, there are few data on children's acquisition of emotion labels. Children can discriminate emotions earlier than they can label them and although the recognition and discrimination of emotions increases with age, emotion labeling is not strongly related to age (Lewis & Michalson 1983). Nevertheless, the process of adding language to the already existing nonverbal communication system is of great monumental importance in human development (Izard 1984). Also the use of language is an alternative way that internal emotional states might be masked, for example, an emotion may be enhanced, denied, or made ambiguous through a discrepancy between what people say about what they feel and

how they act (Lewis & Michalson 1983). Therefore language can be used to deny, to clarify, to substitute, or to enhance emotional expression.

In addition to knowing how to label emotion, the contexts that evoke them also seem critical to understanding emotional experiences (Strayer 1985). People seem to know what emotions are usually produced or are expected in certain situations. This knowledge is an important aspect of emotional experience, since knowledge of the situational rules can be used either to mask an expressed emotion or to facilitate the production of the emotion (Lewis & Michalson 1983). Lewis and Michalson (1983) state that although children learn early in life that many situations are associated with particular emotional states, expressions and experiences the specific socialization rules that govern the acquisition of this knowledge have not been determined. The degree to which others play a significant role in the child's life is the degree to which such observations may influence the child's understanding of emotions (Lewis & Michalson 1983). The socialization of this knowledge about the relationship between emotional states and situations is critical to children's adaptation to their social environment (Lewis & Michalson 1983).

It appears that children as young as 4 years old have already acquired some situational knowledge of when emotions occur. Children acquire knowledge about the contexts for socially appropriate emotions quite easily. Children's situational knowledge was shown by findings in which 4 to 13 year olds demonstrated considerable consensus in choosing the probable emotional responses to vignettes portraying success, failure, nurturance, and other conditions (Barden, Zelko, Duncan & Masters, 1980).

Throughout the Lifespan Some Emotion is Always Present in Conciousness

Duration/Intensity: "The duration of a given emotion feeling in consciousness is a function of several variables including cognition and the level of particular hormones and neurotransmitters" (Izard & Malatesta 1984 p. 53). Izard and Malatesta suggest that under most circumstances emotions do not remain at high intensities for very long. For example, in Dawe's (1934) analysis of two hundred quarrels, pre-school children recovered from their quarrels very quickly for they are cheerful far more often (76.5%) than resentful (23.4%) after quarreling. However, Malatesta and Izard (1984) stress that a decrease in intensity does not necessarily mean decrease to zero or nonexistence.

"The essential quality of an emotion feeling is invariant over the lifespan. It is the invariance of emotion *feeling* that is postulated, not the invariance of event-emotion, emotion-cognition, or emotion-behaviour relationships. All the latter follow a developmental course; they are a large part of the subject matter of emotional development" (Izard & Malatesta 1984 p. 54). Emotion feeling is defined here as a direct derivative of certain neurochemical/sensory processes, not necessarily requiring cognitive representation.

The issue of intensity is of critical concern when looking at emotions and moods. It may be said that the more intense an emotion is, the more likely it is to be related to (or to become) an emotional mood. The failure to measure intensity may preclude a study of the relationship between particular emotional responses and moods (Lewis & Michalson 1983).

However, individual variation in the form and intensity of emotional expression of particular emotions are partly based on underlying biological differences; they are also undoubtedly influenced by past experience and immediate environment (Yarrow 1979).

Simultaneity of Emotions

Harter (1982) points out that by about 10 years of age, children realize that situations can evoke several conflicting emotions simultaneously. Terwogt, Koops, Oosterhoff and Olthof's (1986) research indicated that it was difficult for young children to appreciate conflicting emotions. They would tend to deny that both a negative and a positive emotion can be provoked by situations where such a conflict of emotions is likely, whereas older children would admit to both emotions.

Harter (1986) sought to determine whether there were normative developmental differences in children's ability to appreciate the fact they could have two emotions at the same time. Harter's initial analysis was based largely on Piagetian theory, which suggested that certain cognitive-developmental factors might well influence the child's ability to integrate two opposing emotions or attributes simultaneously. Therefore Harter reasoned that just as the young child has difficulty integrating two physical judgements in the conservation task (for example, height and weight), so might he or she be expected to have difficulty integrating two emotions or attributes, particularly if these are perceived as opposites. This analysis by Harter was mere speculation based on a crude analogy between the understanding of physical and emotional dimensions. Harter has defined two dimensions that appeared to influence the difficulty with which emotions could be combined 'valence' and 'target' of each emotion. The 'valence' dimension refers to whether the two emotions are the same valence, either both positive or both negative; or different valence, one positive and one negative. The 'target' dimension refers to where a child may give a description in which the two feelings are directed toward the same target; object, situation, or person or alternatively directed toward

different targets, for example, first emotion directed to the situation and the second emotion is directed to the person. Her sample of children showed the same all or none thinking at the earlier stages and proceeded through a sequence of levels that seemed to require increasing complex levels of differentiation and integration. The children passed through 5 levels starting at the age of 5.23 years through to 11.34 years.

Level 0 (mean age of 5.23 years), the young child has developed single representations for separate emotions (for example,happy; glad; sad; mad; scared;). However, at any time, only one emotional representation can be applied to a given event. The child can handle emotions that occur in temporal order, since this involves only one emotion at a time. The child denies that he or she can have two feelings at the same time.

Level 1 (mean age of 7.27 years), the child has developed a representational set for feelings of the same valence (for example, one set for positive-valence feelings and a separate set for negative-valence feelings).

Level 2 (mean age of 8.72 years), the child can direct one emotion to one aspect of the situation and attach the second same valence emotion to a second aspect of the situation. But the child cannot yet integrate the sets of positive and negative emotions.

Level 3 (mean age of 10.08 years), the child can now integrate the representational sets for positive and negative emotions, and thus bring them to bear on a situation simultaneously.

However, her or he has difficulty integrating both these emotional sets so that they relate to a single target.

Level 4 (mean age of 11.34 years), the child overcomes the limitation of level 3, in that he or she can now acknowledge that the same target will provoke both a positive and a negative emotion.

Harter (1986) has focused primarily on the underlying cognitive-structural changes that may be, in part, responsible for these developmental differences. Harter stresses the importance both developmentally and for clinical implications how other people are such powerful sources or causes of children's emotions. "It may well be that the understanding of multiple emotions caused by significant others lags behind one's understanding of emotions provoked by events or situations, suggesting that there are important motivational or dynamic factors involved in addition to cognitive-structural dimensions" (Harter 1986 p. 134). Harter suggests that it could be possible that opposite-valence feelings directed toward a single person (for example happiness and anger toward a parent) may cause more conflict or may be perceived as more upsetting than opposite-valence feelings toward an event or situation.

Harter's preceding analysis has demonstrated how a cognitive-developmental approach, focusing on advances in the ability both to differentiate and to integrate emotional concepts, can account for a five stage acquisition sequence of children's understanding of the simultaneity of their own emotions.

Harter (1986) extended her investigation to children's understandings of the simultaneity of their parents' emotions. Harter's findings indicate that "understanding of one's own emotions precedes understanding of parental emotions" (p. 135). Children appear to be better able to apply a

given level of emotional understanding to their own experiences than to their parents' experiences. For example, a level 3 child, who can appreciate the fact that he or she can be both happy and mad at the same time, will not yet appreciate the fact that a parent can also have both positive and negative feelings at the same time. A child who does not yet realize parents can experience different valence feelings and may believe that he or she is the cause of parental anger would be under considerable anxiety, compared with the child who appreciates the fact that their parents can have both positive negative feeling simultaneously and the child is not egocentric and can decenter. The child would thus realize that areas in the parents emotional life do not directly involve the child.

Hence an important direction for future research is the investigation of factors that influence children's reactions to the emotional responses of significant other in their lives.

Lewis and Michalson (1983) propose an explanation for the simultaneity of emotions. Suggesting that the subject's responses (that is a selection of multiple emotions rather than a single emotion) would perhaps indicate that the first emotion identified as the likely response would seem to be the one that best reflects society's expectations of situationally appropriate emotions - reflect the perceived cultural expectations, where the emotions selected later may have had personal meaning to the subject.

Conflict

As noted previously the development of children's emotion and its role in social behaviour has recently become a focus of interest by developmental psychologists. Of particular concern is children's understanding of emotions in interpersonal communication with significant others in their lives. Conflicts between children and adults can

be viewed as indices of important socializing communications. Shantz (1987) has stressed that the study of conflict may be a means of entering social systems to reveal the structure of social contexts of development. This possibility is based on the notion that most non-conflictual states between individuals (between children, between children and their parents) depend to an important extent on the participants having shared goals, expectations, rules and values, or at least having compatible ones. Indeed Maccoby and Martin (1983) proposed that families be studied in terms of conflict, as a pressing problem facing families of today is the growing conflict among siblings and parents.

Conflicts between children and adults, can, be viewed as indices of important socializing communicators (or cultural control messages). Research has shown that children as participants in conflict reveal an impressive degree of knowledge about social rules, strategies and other people's intentions. Children are also responsive to their adversary during conflict as shown by the sequential dependencies in moves within episodes. An important point to consider is the role of social conflict in children's development, in particular affective development. However, to date there has been very little study concerning affective responses and expressions of children at various ages to interactions with peers or adults (Furman & Masters 1980, Strayer 1985). There is surprisingly very little work (for example, Camras 1977-1984; Dawe 1934) in the area of emotions within conflict. Little attention has been given to children's arousal, anger or glee during adversive episodes. Hence, children's moods and emotions during and after disputes are uncharted areas (Shantz 1987).

Social conflict has been studied most often, but not exclusively, among toddlers and pre-schoolers, usually in nursery schools and sometimes in dyads or small groups in laboratory settings. Before venturing further it is important to clarify the meaning of the term 'conflict'. A state

of conflict indicates incompatible behaviours or goals. Conflict is expressed when one person overtly opposes another person's actions or statements. Aggressive behaviour (which tends to be equated with conflict quite readily) is only one of the many types of behaviours that may occur in conflict, or in fact, it may be entirely absent.

To review investigations on children's conflictual relations the following research has been presented under two broad areas. Firstly, Interpersonal conflicts of children (peers) in natural settings and secondly, Interpersonal conflicts of family members.

Interpersonal Conflicts of Children (peers) in Natural Settings

From an extensive review of the social and cognitive developmental literature Shantz (1987) found that research on interpersonal conflicts between children in naturalistic settings has mainly focused on the incidence and duration of conflict. The issues, tactics, behaviours and strategies used during conflict and the outcomes of conflict.

Incidence and Duration: Conflicts are not only infrequent, they are also brief. Hay (1984) has estimated that the median number of conflicts among pre-school children per hour was about 8. These data should, however, be treated as approximations of incidence until more observational studies are available. The average duration of conflicts across several studies was 24 seconds (Dawe 1934, Hay & Ross 1982). Shantz stresses that although conflicts are rare and short, they should not be thought unimportant. "The participants at the time of conflict give every indication of being serious in their pursuits; these are not trivial events at the moment they are occurring" (Shantz 1987 p. 286).

Issues: The largest percentage of conflicts during the toddler and pre-school ages appears to involve the possession and use of objects (Dawe 1934,

Hay 1984). The second largest category appears to be conflict over another child's actions or lack of action. There is some hint of a developmental trend in that, as children get older, an increasingly smaller proportion of the conflicts are about the physical environment (for example objects and space) and an increasingly larger proportion concerns control of the social environment (Dawe 1934). "The events that children care enough to fight about seem similar, in many respects, to those of adults: valued resources, controlling others behaviour, rule violations, facts and truth" (Shantz 1987 p. 294). Shantz notes that when investigating developmental changes these categories of issues may be too broad. For example, children may come into conflict about matters that they are in the process of mastering. Issues, for example, number concepts (is 2 bigger than 1) are more likely to be issues of conflict for the young pre-schooler than compared to the older child. Shantz stresses that more developmentally relevant categories may provide one means of determining whether issues differ across pre-school, childhood and adolescence.

Strategies: Strategies during conflict not only vary widely, but aggression constitutes a smaller proportion than is commonly assumed. Most of the work in conflict episodes is accompanied by talk. However, strategies also include not only verbal statements but gestures (nonverbal conflict) and affective expressions. Camras (1977) provided data on the facial expressions of children in conflict, particularly the occurrence of an 'aggressive' facial expression. In this object dispute study children used aggressive facial expressions (elements of disgust, anger and/or determination) in about 25% of the conflicts. The aggressive facial expressions were followed by hesitancy on the part of the challenger. In addition the politeness of children's language varied with their affective state as indexed by the use of facial expressions (Camras 1984). Camras (1984) notes that interactants sometimes may make inferences about a speaker's

affect based on his/her choice of language as well as his/her nonverbal behaviour. If the use of facial displays declines with age and the use of language increases with age, then language may become increasingly important for emotion communication over the course of development.

Outcomes: The majority of conflicts that pre-schoolers have are settled by the children themselves either one way or another, without adult intervention (Bakeman & Brownlee, 1982; Dawe 1934). Of those conflicts settled by children there is quite a clear win/loss outcome. That is, one child gives up his or her own goal or complies with the other child's goal (Dawe 1934). Dawe (1934) found that 76.5% of the 200 quarrels observed were followed by little or no upset, and play was resumed. Hay and Ross (1982) noted the outcome of one conflict affected the rest: a child who lost a dispute was more likely than the winner to initiate the next. Further, some studies have linked social-cognitive abilities to children's success in actual conflict situations. For example, the developmental level for conceptualizing persons, social rules, and conflict resolution strategies (Shantz 1987).

Finally, disputes constitute a large arena in which prosocial as well as combative actions are displayed. Children's social skills are acquired and refined, not only through their pleasant, harmonious encounters, but also through conflict. It might be enlightening to study directly children's perceptions and conceptions of the conflicts in which they participate to determine what conflicts mean to those involved. To what extent, for example, do children construe messages about themselves? Also to what extent is a child's behaviour dependent upon or independent of the partners behaviour?

Interpersonal Conflicts of Family Members

Of all the relationships in which young children are involved, perhaps the least understood is that between siblings. Kendrick and Dunn (1983) note that information on conflict between young siblings rather than peers is less extensive. The pattern of differences in the older and younger siblings behaviour indicates that their roles are more distinct than they might be in peer interaction. As expected, older siblings assume a leadership role in initiating and directing the interaction, which is most likely a function of their large repertoire of social skills. The younger siblings, however, may have an important role in maintaining the interaction, submitting to aggressive behaviour or imitating their older siblings.

As a result of the time siblings spend together and the frequency of their interaction, they are likely to become very intimate and familiar and to develop empathy and communication patterns with each other. Dunn and Kendrick (1979) reported that in 16 of the 20 families they observed there were interactions which reflected altruism and empathy between siblings of a very young age. The interactions were also marked by a strong affective component ranging from warm and affectionate to hostile. However, research this far has shown that antagonistic behaviour is frequently observed, more commonly from older to younger sibling than vice versa, and that younger siblings become increasingly aggressive over time (Kendrick & Dunn 1983).

More recently, Dunn and Munn (1985) studied the beginnings of children's participation in family life, focusing on changes in both emotional and cognitive development. "The intense encounters among children, their siblings, and their parents over conflicts of interest and transgression of rules provide a context in which the growth of children's understanding of moral and conventional rules and of the intentions and

feelings of familiar others is highlighted, and is also presumably fostered" (p. 480). Dunn and Munn's results indicate that during the child's second year, displays of anger and distress in conflict become more frequent, the child begins to understand how to upset and tease other family members and shows an understanding of what is permitted or prohibited in the family. It is, however, difficult to determine if the children were responding to the emotion expressed by the other participant or some other feature of the conflict which itself led to the emotion displayed. The topic of conflict between the sibling and the mother could, for instance, be both the cause of the emotion expressed by the participants and a salient influence on the child's response. Dunn and Munn stress that emotional behaviour should not be seen simply as emotional expression, distinct from instrumental behaviour. Emotional behaviour in a social situation may involve negotiation between two individuals, each one's perception of the others' state and prediction of their behaviour and how this influences their own emotional behaviour. Therefore changes in children's expressive behaviour could also be seen as developments in children's negotiating behaviour in their interaction with other family members.

Measures of Emotion

A controversial issue in research concerns the measurement of emotion (Rotenberg, Mars & Crick 1987-1988). "Even in the past few years researchers have returned to the study of emotion, this area of inquiry is still plagued by difficulties of measuring emotions in infants and young children. Despite the relatively large number of standardized instruments available for assessing cognitive development, emotional measures are scarce." (Lewis 1985 p. 18).

Theorists (for example, Yarrow 1979) have noted the great variety of ways emotions have been assessed. From physiological measures to nonverbal and verbal behavioural assessment. Physiological assessment has included monitoring of the heart rate, electrogalvanic responses, and changes in the glandular system. Nonverbal behaviour has included observation of postural, gestural and facial expressions. The third broad measure of emotion is through verbal behaviour. The most frequent method of choice for assessing a subjective experience or "felt-emotion" (Izard 1982 p. 4) is some form of direct self-report in interviews or on questionnaires.

Studies are increasingly attempting to explore the interrelations among these varied measures of emotions (Yarrow 1979). The relationship between physiological indices and facial expression remains relatively unexplored (Lewis & Michalson 1982). The studies of the relationship between behavioural and psychophysiological indices are not consistent in their findings. For example, research has demonstrated some relationships between heart rate acceleration and facial expressions of distress (Campos, Emde, Gaensbauer & Henderson, 1975; Waters, Matas & Sroufe, 1975), whereas, other studies find no clear relationships between changes in facial expression and heart rate acceleration (Lewis, Brooks, & Haviland, 1978; Sroufe, Waters, & Matas, 1974). Lewis and Michalson (1982) stress that it is still widely believed a covarying set of facial and physiological responses exists, although the search for such sets has yet to prove useful. Physiological reactions determine only the intensity of our emotional reaction, they do not provide information concerning the identity of the emotion that is being experienced.

The second measure of nonverbal behaviour, postural/gestural responses, has probably received the least attention in empirical studies (Lewis & Michalson 1982). Although these behaviours are commonly used

as indices of emotional states in everyday encounters, they have unfortunately been underused in empirical research. Research in the past decade has also made it clear that innate universal expressions are subject to modification, masking, and even exaggerated distortion through socializaton and enculturation.

The relationship between facial and postural activity has not been explored, even though, Lewis and Michalson (1982) suggest, that they may relate to one another. Lewis and Michalson provide an example where a child is unable to express affect through bodily movements (for example, a child cannot move away from the approaching stranger) and therefore may produce or accentuate facial responses than would occur if the child could flee.

The third measure and most frequent method for assessing a felt-emotion is some form of direct self-report. If we look at the relationship between self-report and an objective observer's assessment of anothers feelings there are a couple of difficulties. Firstly, an objective observer can only make inferences from a remote perspective of another's feelings. Secondly, feelings are often difficult to bring out into the open especially for children, as it may be difficult for them to communicate fully nuances of emotion.

Although specific emotions can be reliably identified using the above measures, many problems still exist. We do not know whether one set of responses more accurately references an emotional state than another. We do not know the relationship between sets of responses, nor do we have an idea of how they change as a function of otogeny and culture. New responses appear as the child develops; in addition, as the child becomes more mature, forms of expression change. There is the possibility of vast individual differences in responses that children use to express emotion,

therefore a consideration must be made of individual differences in the degree of an emotional state.

The method used in the present study is a form of direct self-report as the purpose was to gain children's knowledge of their emotions during and after conflict. It was not ethically viable to gain observational data to make comparisons with the children's responses.

Rationale

Lewis (1985) stressed that all current measures in development are based on cognitive variables and in order to understand children's development, research needs to redirect attention to emotional development. This study endeavours to do this by providing a broad investigation into children's knowledge of their emotions when involved in conflict with their siblings and parents. Conflict situations were selected as they provide a window where social skills are being acquired and refined to enable the child to cope both personally and socially within a situation where emotions can range from warm and affectionate to hostile. The affective nature of disputes has received very little attention from investigators. There is a growing concern of the amount of conflict among families of today and the pronounced effect this may have on children's emotional development.

Following, is an outline of the most pertinent questions arising from the gaps in the literature to date and previous research on interpersonal conflicts. These questions provide a framework for a broad investigation into the affective nature of family disputes. The following questions concern the intensity, duration and simultaneity of emotions during and after conflict and, also the reasons and consequences for the expression and inhibition of emotion. It is acknowledged that each of these areas

encompass a large realm of knowledge and each one in its own right deserves its own study. However, for the purpose of this investigation each area is dealt with in a broad sense.

Emotion Expression and Inhibition

Saarni (1979) found that as children become older they become better at using display rules that is, children learn very quickly what is socially and culturally appropriate in certain situations. There is an obvious need to suppress or transform some types of emotions, for example, negative in order to avoid hostility or escalation of feelings. Saarni found that most of the reasons for hiding emotion are to avoid trouble and preserve self-esteem. Also with age, children are more likely to recognize and accept or understand that an overt behaviour display may not match one's internal emotional experience. Thus older children are able to detect the hidden mental aspects of an emotion situation compared to younger children who rely only on the observable aspects of a situation (Harris 1981). These findings led us to further questions:

1. Is there a difference over age in whether emotion is expressed or inhibited?

2. What are the reasons for either expression of inhibition of emotion and do these reasons differ over age?

Intensity and Duration of Emotion

Throughout the lifespan some emotion is always present in consciousness. Under most circumstances emotions do not remain at high

intensities for very long (Dawe 1934, Izard & Malatesta 1984). A decrease in intensity does not mean however a decrease to zero or non-existence. Also it may be said that the more intense an emotion is, the more likely it is to be related to (or to become) an emotional mood (Lewis &Michalson 1983). The following questions arise:

1. Is there a difference over age in the intensities of the emotions experienced at the different parts of conflict?

2. Is there a difference over age in the duration of the emotions experienced at the different parts of conflict?

3. Is the intensity of an emotion related to its duration? (if the emotion was experienced at a high intensity is it more likely to become a mood?).

Simultaneity of Emotions

By about 10 years of age, children realize that situations can evoke several conflicting emotions simultaneously (Harter 1986). Harter's research would suggest that 6 year old children have developed single representations for separate emotions (for example, happy, glad, sad, mad, scared) and are developing a representational set for feelings of the same valence (for example, one set for positive and a separate set for negative). The child can handle emotions that occur in temporal order but denies that he or she can have two feelings at the same time. By about 10 years of age a child can now integrate the representational sets for positive and negative emotions, and thus bring them to bear on a situation simultaneously. However, he or she has difficulty integrating both these emotional sets so

that they relate to a single target. Harter found that it wasn't until children reached level 4 (mean age of 11.34 years) that the child overcomes the previous limitations in that he or she can now acknowledge that the same target will provoke both a positive and a negative emotion. Following Harter's analysis certain questions emerge:

1. Is there a difference over age in the number of emotions experienced within the different targets of conflict?

2. Do the intensities vary (either decrease, increase or stay the same) with each successive emotion. Is there any difference between young and old children?

Each question is investigated to provide a broad insight into the affective nature of disputes.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 120 children equally divided into three age groups: the youngest children had a mean age of 6 years, 9 months (S.D 4 months); the intermediate group had a mean age of 8 years, 8 months (S.D 5 months); the oldest group had a mean age of 10 years, 8 months (S.D 4 months). Each age group consisted of 20 boys and 20 girls. The children were randomly selected from a lower-class state primary school in Christchurch (as defined by the 1981 Census data and the 1986 Education Board data for the Christchurch urban area).

Materials

Three vignettes were devised about typical everyday conflict encounters that occur in the home The vignettes comprised the target child and a family member, (for example, target child and parent, target child and older brother, and target child and younger brother). Each vignette involved a dispute between the two family members. The disputes are defined as constructive in nature, that is, the arguments were resolved hence satisfaction for both parties.

A Pilot Study was conducted to determine the appropriateness of the vignettes at each age level and how representative they were of everyday family conflict. The three vignettes were read to a pilot sample of 20 subjects. From the pilot testing, the vignettes were condensed to shorten the listening time span and the theme of one vignette was altered, thus, being

more representative of conflict in the home. Overall, the children at each age level could relate readily with the theme of each vignette.

Vignettes for the three age groups were identical (with the exception of certain lexical changes introduced for each gender). "The process of identifying feelings appropriate to particular situations appears to be facilitated by a similarity between the subject and the child in the story. When the person in the situation is more like the subject (that is, similar in age or of the same gender), the subject's ability to report the emotion accurately is facilitated" Shantz 1975 (cited in Lewis & Michalson 1983 p. 181). Hence a male name was chosen for the target child when a male subject was interviewed and a female name was chosen for the target child when a female subject was interviewed. Each subject was told that the person in the story was the same age as themselves.

The three vignettes used were:

1. Bed-time Vignette

Parent-Child conflict: Target Child - instigator of conflict
Parent - recipient

It was late and time for Jane/John to go to bed.
"no I don't want to go to bed" said Jane/John,
"I want to stay up late and watch TV".
Her/His Mum/ started to get mad and shouted,
"go to bed!".
Jane/John shouted back to her/his Mum
"no I'm not!" and just sat in her/his chair,
but after a while she/he quietly went to bed.

2. Riding a Bike Vignette

Sibling- Conflict : Target Child - recipient

Older Child - instigator of conflict

Sarah/Brian ran home from school just to play on her/his new bike. While she/he was riding it her/his older brother came over and asked if he could have a ride.
"No it's my bike" shouted Sarah/Brian.
"I want a go" said her/his brother, and he started to get mad.
"No!" Sarah/Brian yelled
"I'm older than you, so I can ride it when I want" her/his brother cried out.
"It's my new bike and I'm going to ride it" yelled Sarah.
"No you're not" her/his brother shouted back and he started to shake his fists.
"If you promise to go away" said Sarah/Brian "I'll let you ride it tomorrow after school".
Her/His brother started to moan but then thought it was a good deal.

3. Picture Drawing Vignette

Sibling-Conflict: Target Child - recipient

Younger Child - instigator of conflict

Tracey/Greg was drawing a picture for homework when her/his little brother came over. He grabbed the pen and cried,

"let me have a go".
"Don't, it's my picture" yelled Tracey/Greg.
"But I want a go" her/his brother shouted
as he started to scribble on Tracey/Greg's
picture.
"Don't you'll ruin it" yelled Tracey/Greg
and pushed her/his brother away
"It's not fair!" cried her/his brother,
"I want a go".
"Okay" said Tracey/Greg," here's another
piece of paper, you can draw on that one".

A story book *Beginning to Learn about Feelings* by Richard L. Allington and Kathleen Cowles (1986), Raintree Publishers: USA and a Scholastic Filmstrip titled *All Kinds of Feelings* (1972) from the series *Who Am I* 74/419 set, Department of Education: NZ was used as introductory material which was read and shown to the children.

Procedure

The 6 and 8 year old subjects were read aloud a story about feelings and the 10 year olds were shown a filmstrip on feelings. The filmstrip and book were used as introductory material to allow the children to become accustomed to the experimenter and to become familiar and comfortable with the topic.

Subjects were interviewed individually in a quiet room at the school, where they were told that they would hear three short stories and would be asked some questions about 'feelings'. They should listen and answer the questions as carefully as possible.

After each vignette had been read the children were asked to imagine that they were the girl or boy in the story and how they would feel in that situation.

A procedure involving children remembering and producing situations was not employed as it could often be argued that age differences might only reflect a deficiency among young children in remembering or producing situations (that is, production deficiency, Flavell 1977). Instead the above method was employed in which children had to respond to situations provided by the experimenter. Also a self-referential version was used because it was felt that it would be most interesting to find out what children would predict about their own affective responses to certain experiences.

Each subject received the following 12 questions after each vignette. The 12 questions were divided into three sections.

A. Emotion Towards the Topic of Conflict

B. Emotion Towards the Participant

C. Emotion at the End of Conflict

Example: Bed-time Vignette

A. Emotion Towards the Topic of Conflict

1. Because you weren't allowed to stay up late and you had to go to bed, would you feel; *sad, happy, mad, scared, worried, guilty*?
2. How *(emotion)*; a *little* or a *lot*?
3. Would you still feel *(emotion)* tomorrow; *yes* or *no*?

B. Emotion Towards the Participant

4. How do you feel about mum being; *mad, sad, happy, mad, scared, worried, guilty?*
5. How *(emotion)*; a *little* or a *lot*?
6. Would you still feel *(emotion)* tomorrow; *yes* or *no*?
7. Would you want mum to know you are *(emotion)*; *yes* or *no*?
8. Why would you or why wouldn't you?

C. Emotion at the End of Conflict

9. How would you feel at the end of the story; *sad, happy, mad, scared, worried, guilty?*
10. Why would you feel *(emotion)*?
11. How *(emotion)*; a *little* or a *lot*?
12. Would you still feel *(emotion)* tomorrow; *yes* or *no* ?

Questions 1, 2 and 3 were designed to investigate children's emotional response(s) solely to the topic of conflict. That is, for the Bed-time vignette; not being allowed to stay up late and watch a favourite Television program. For the Riding a Bike vignette; the issue of conflict involved the target child's older brother pushing in and demanding a ride of his/her new bike. Finally the issue of conflict in the Picture-Drawing vignette involved the target child's younger brother coming over and scribbling on his/her picture that was to be drawn for homework.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 were designed to investigate children's emotional response(s) solely to the emotion expressed by the other family member during the conflict episode.

Questions 7 and 8 (open-ended questions) were designed to investigate children's reasons for expression or inhibition of their emotion towards the other participant.

Questions 9, 10, 11, and, 12 were directed at the emotions the children would feel at the end of the conflict episode and their reasons for their choice of emotion.

Subjects worked through all questions in each section pertaining to one emotion before turning to the second. A range of 6 emotions was presented; sad, mad, glad, scared, worried, guilty, allowing the subjects to choose as many as they felt. The whole session lasted about 20 minutes and was tape-recorded.

RESULTS

Introduction

The results presented in this chapter are both qualitative and quantitative. In the following sections, the data analysis and response rate is explained. Children's responses to the questions on emotion expression and inhibition are categorized and compared within two areas of conflict, that is, towards the participant and at the end of the conflict encounters. Intensity and duration of children's emotional responses during conflict (to the topic of conflict and towards the other participant) and at the end of the conflict episodes were examined. Also the nature of the relationship between the intensity and duration of children's emotional responses were investigated within each area of conflict. The simultaneity and intensity of children's emotional responses during and at the end of conflict are presented; followed by a summary of the main findings.

Data Analysis

For ease of comparison, the original sample population was reduced to two age groups 'young' (6 years old) and 'old' (10 years old).[1]

Previous research has tended to collapse individual negative emotions under the general title of negative affect (for example Harris, Olthof and Terwogt, 1981). It was intended within this research to present the emotional responses under the general title of negative and positive

[1] The two age groups consisted of 46 children equally divided by sex with a mean age of 6 years 9 months for the young group, and a mean age of 10 years 5 months for the old group.

affect. However, upon investigation it was also decided to be valuable to examine the nature of each emotion individually. Only viewing the results of collapsed negative affect alone would tend to hide the differing contribution of each emotion.

The results of the three vignettes; Bed-time, Riding-a-bike and Picture-drawing were collapsed together along the areas of conflict.

A. Emotions Experienced During Conflict.

(i) To the Topic of Conflict.

(ii) Towards the Participant

B. Emotions at the End of Conflict.

It was considered necessary and appropriate to collapse the three stories together to allow an overall picture to develop of the emotional response patterns of conflict in the home and with the different family members. Thus, the sample was considered as independent. The results were placed in tables and figures of percentages and a binomial test for the significance of difference between two proportions was employed to assess whether there was a significant difference in emotional responding between the two age groups. More complex sophisticated statistical tests could be used to determine and predict the percentage difference between the two age groups at a certain accuracy rate and equally take into account the correlated nature of the collapsed data.[2] However, it was decided that to undertake analysis of this kind is beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, a simple binomial test was employed.

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[2] Advice was sought from Professor John Deely, Mathematics Department University of Canterbury, regarding the applicability of these tests in the present study.

Frequency of Responses

The results from this study indicate that there are different emotional response patterns between the three areas of conflict, that is, emotional response to the topic of conflict, towards the other participant and at the end of conflict. Of the 6 emotions the children had to choose from, the majority of both young (77.9%) and old (95.5%) responded with the emotion mad to the topic of conflict. Most of them were angered by what the dispute was about. However, there were a variety of mixed feelings felt towards the other participant. If the other participant was an adult, for example, a parent, then the emotion tended to be either fear (young 32.3%, old 41.0%) or sadness (young 25.9%, old 38.5%). However, if the other person in the quarrel was younger than the respondent then the response was either sadness (young 40.5%, old 56.8%) or anger (young 46%, old 41%). If the other person in the dispute was an older sister or brother then the response tended to be anger (young 51.4%, old 80%). The majority of both young (74.2%) and old (79.1%) children responded with the emotion glad at the end of conflict.

Thus, the following analysis has focused only on these emotions :

Topic of Conflict *mad.*

Towards Participant *sad, mad, scared.*

End of Conflict *glad.*

Emotion Expression and Inhibition

(i) Towards the Participant During Conflict

TABLE-1 *Mean Percentage of Children Wanting to Hide their Negative Emotion from the other Participant During Conflict.*

AFFECT	AGE	
	YOUNG	OLD
Sad	62.1 (18/29)	65.9 (27/41)
Scared	94.1 (16/17)	90.0 (18/20)
Mad	87.8 (36/40)	61.4 (35/57)**
Combined	80.5 (70/87)	67.8 (80/118)*

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

A large majority of both the young (80.5%) and old (67.8%) children preferred to hide the emotion they felt from the other participant during the conflict episodes (see Table-1). Both the young and old children preferred to hide the emotions sad and scared, however, more young children (87.8%) compared to older (61.4%) preferred not to express the emotion mad towards the other person ($z = 2.921$ $p<.01$).

When the children were asked why they would not tell the other person how they were feeling a range of justifications were offered (see Table-2).

TABLE-2 *Children's Reasons for Hiding Negative Emotion from the other Participant.*

CATEGORY	CHILDREN'S COMMENTS
1. Fear of Reprisal	
(i) Social	"Because I don't want to be called a scaredy cat"
	"Because everyone would know and tease me"
(ii) Physical	"Because I would get a hiding"
	"Because Dad would get angry and hit me"
(iii) Verbal	"Because Mum and Dad would grizzle at me more"
	"I would get yelled at"
2. Inhibition	"I would get too embarrassed"
	"I would feel too shy"
3. Prevention of further family conflict	"Because if I said anything Mum and Dad would fight even more"
4. Prevention of further strain of others emotions	"Because I might hurt their feelings"
	"Because my brother would get even sadder"
5. Don't know	"Don't know"
	Or no reply

Analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the majority of both the young and old children's responses consisted of five superordinate categories; 1. Fear of reprisal, 2. Inhibition, 3. Prevention of further family conflict, 4. Prevention of further strain of other's emotions and 5. Don't know and three subordinate modes for category one (i) Social reprisal, (ii) Physical reprisal and (iii) Verbal reprisal (see Table-2). An example of some

quotes (the most common stated response) noted by both young old children are given within each of the categories.

The mean percentage of responses within each of the above categories are presented in Table-3. From Table-3 it can be noted that a large majority of both young and old children (47.1% and 57.5% respectively) did not know why they wanted to hide their feelings from the other person or could not give a reason why. A higher percentage of young children compared to old children preferred to hide their emotions from the other participant for fear of verbal reprisal, for example, "I would get yelled at" (combined negative affect 10.0% and 1.3% respectively $z = 2.400$ $p<.05$). A higher percentage of young children compared to old children preferred to hide their emotions to prevent further stress of the other person's emotions, for example, "I might hurt their feelings" (combined negative affect 17.1 % and 6.3% respectively $z = 2.148$ $p<.05$). The following trends were also evident. A higher percentage of older children compared to younger children preferred to hide their emotion for fear of social reprisal (combined negative affect 2.9% and 6.3% respectively, $z = -1.247$ n.s.) and a higher percentage of older children compared to younger were more inhibited in expressing their emotion towards the other person (combined negative affect, 15.0% and 7.1% respectively $z = -1.524$ n.s.). However, regarding the emotion, mad, this trend was reversed. There were a higher percentage of younger children compared to older who were inhibited in expressing their emotion (11.1% and 2.9 % respectively $z = 1.49$ n.s.).

TABLE-3 *Mean Percentage of Preferred Reasons for Hiding Negative Emotion from the other Participant during the Conflict Episode.*

CATEGORY	AFFECT	SAD		SCARED		MAD		COMBINED AFFECT	
	AGE	YOUNG	OLD	YOUNG	OLD	YOUNG	OLD	YOUNG	OLD
1. Fear of reprisal									
(i) Social		___	11.1 (3/27)	12.5 (2/16)	11.1 (2/18)	___	___	2.9 (2/70)	6.3 (5/80)
(ii) Physical		___	___	12.5 (2/16)	___	19.4 (7/36)	25.7 (9/35)	12.9 (2/70)	11.3 (9/80)
(iii) Verbal		16.7 (3/18)	3.7 (1/27)	___	___	11.1 (4/36)	___	10.0 (7/70)	1.3 (1/80)*
2. Inhibition		5.6 (1/18)	18.5 (5/27)	___	33.3 (6/18)	11.1 (4/36)	2.9 (1/35)	7.1 (5/70)	15.0 (12/80)
3. Prevention of further family conflict		5.6 (1/18)	3.7 (1/27)	6.3 (1/16)	___	___	5.7 (2/35)	2.9 (2/70)	3.8 (3/80)
4. Prevention of further strain of other's emotions		27.8 (5/18)	3.7 (1/27)	18.8 (3/16)	5.5 (1/18)	11.1 (4/36)	8.6 (3/35)	17.1 (12/70)	6.3 (5/80)*
5. Don't know		44.4 (8/18)	63.0 (17/27)	50.0 (8/16)	50.0 (9/18)	47.2 (17/36)	57.1 (20/35)	47.1 (33/70)	57.5 (46/80)

*p<.05

(ii) At the End of Conflict

TABLE-4 *Examples of Children's Comments for Expressing "Glad" at the End of Conflict.*

CATEGORY	CHILDREN'S COMMENTS
1. Conflict resolved	"Because it's over"
	"It's the end and everyone is happy"
2. Personal gain	"Because I get to have a go and it's a good deal"
	"Because I get to stay up late"
	"Because I won"
3. Physical, verbal abuse terminated	"I've stopped being growled at"
	"Because I didn't get a smack"
4. Apologized	"Because I said sorry"
5. Don't know	"Don't Know"
	Or no reply

A further analysis of the qualitative data revealed that a majority of both young and old children (64.5% and 76.8% respectively) expressed the emotion glad at the end of conflict. The children were asked why they felt glad and their responses were placed into five categories; 1. Conflict resolved, 2. Personal gain, 3. Physical, verbal abuse terminated, 4. Apologized and 5. Don't know (see Table-4). An example of some quotes (the most commonly stated response) noted by both young old children are given within each of the categories. The percentage of responses within each of these categories is presented in Table-5.

TABLE-5 *Mean Percentage of Preferred Reasons for the Emotion "Glad" at the End of Conflict.*

CATEGORY	AGE	
	YOUNG	OLD
1. Conflict resolved	53.9 (48/89)	41.5 (44/106)
2. Personal gain	9.0 (8/89)	22.2 (24/106)*
3. Physical, verbal abuse terminated	5.7 (14/89)	6.6 (7/106)*
4. Apologized	3.4 (3/89)	2.8 (3/106)
5. Don't know	17.9 (16/89)	26.4 (28/106)

*$p<.05$

A large majority of both young and old children (53.9% and 41.5% respectively) expressed the emotion glad because the conflict had been resolved. However, there were significantly more older children (22.6%) compared to younger (9.0%) who proposed personal gain as their reason for expressing gladness at the end of the conflict ($z = -2.466$, $p<.05$). Significantly more younger children (15.7%) compared to older (6.6%) expressed the emotion glad because the the physical or verbal abuse (or both) had stopped ($z = 2.087$, $p<.05$).

Intensity and Duration of Emotion

(i) Intensity of Emotion During and at the End of Conflict

TABLE-6 *Mean Percentage of Responses with High Intensity across the Two Areas of Conflict.*

CONFLICT	AFFECT	AGE	
		YOUNG	OLD
During Conflict			
(i) Topic of Conflict	Mad	81.1 (77/95)	62.0 (80/129)**
(ii) Towards Participant	Sad	44.8 (13/29)	12.2 (5/41)***
	Mad	73.2 (30/41)	65.0 (37/57)
	Scared	64.7 (11/17)	25.0 (5/20)*
	Combined	62.1 (54/87)	39.8 (47/118)***
End of Conflict	Glad	83.1 (74/89)	80.2 (85/106)

*p<005, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table-6 indicates that there were significantly more young children compared to older children responding with high intensity of negative emotions to the topic of conflict and towards the other participant ($z = 3.066$, $p<.01$; $z = 3.157$ $p<.001$). However, on the emotion mad felt towards the participant there was no significant difference between the two age groups in intensity, both young and old children experienced high intensity. Therefore, the intensity of negative affect (sad and scared) experienced during conflict decreased with age. There were no significant differences between the young and old children in the intensity of the positive emotion

glad at the end of conflict (z = .0514 n.s.). Hence both age groups experienced high intensity.

(ii) Duration of Emotion During and at the End of Conflict

TABLE-7 *Mean Percentage of Responses with Short Duration across the Two Areas of Conflict.*

CONFLICT	AFFECT	AGE	
		YOUNG	OLD
During Conflict			
(i) Topic of Conflict	Mad	65.3 (62/95)	76.0 (98/129)
(ii) Towards Participant	Sad	82.8 (24/29)	95.1 (39/41)
	Mad	85.4 (35/41)	84.2 (48/57)
	Scared	88.2 (15/17)	95.0 (19/20)
	Combined	85.1 (74/87)	89.8 (106/118)
End of Conflict	Glad	4.5 (4/89)	6.6 (7/106)

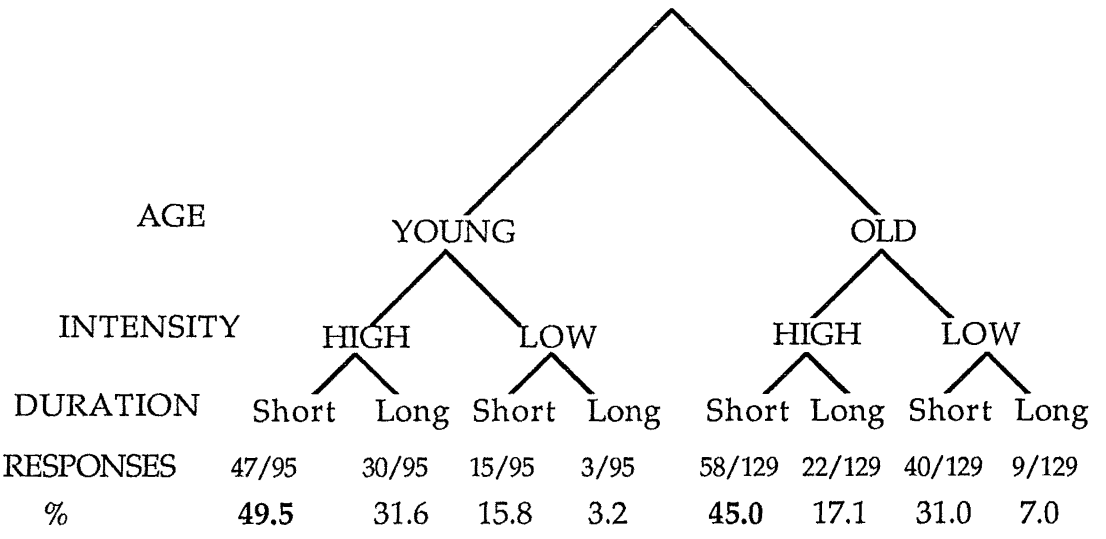
Table-7 illustrates that there were no significant differences between young and old children in the duration of emotion (Topic of Conflict z = -1.744 n.s.; Towards Participant z = -0.989 n.s. and End of Conflict z = -0.296 n.s). Hence, both young and old children experienced short duration of negative emotions during conflict and long duration of positive emotion at the end of conflict.

The Relationship Between the Intensity and Duration of Emotion

The relationship between the intensity of an emotion and its duration was investigated within the topic of conflict, towards the participant and at the end of conflict. That is, the more intense an emotion is it more likely to become a mood, that is, last for a long duration? The following figures represent the mean number of emotional responses that were either: high intensity and of short duration, high intensity of long duration; or low intensity and of short duration, low intensity of long duration. A comparison is made between the young and old children.

(i) Topic of Conflict

FIGURE-1 *Mean Percentage of Responses Towards the Topic of Conflict: Emotion "Mad"*

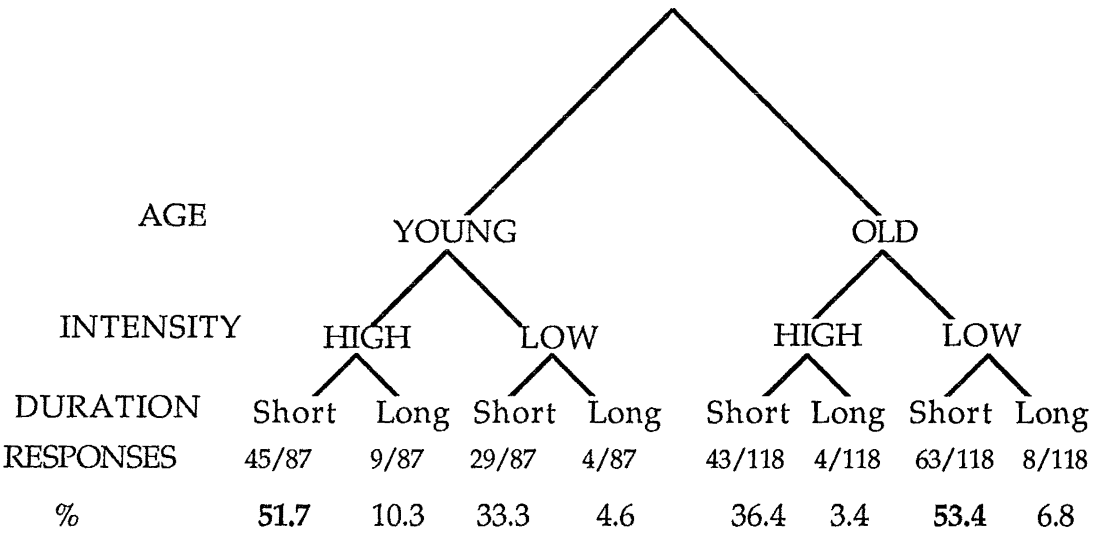


In Figure-1 both young and old children (49.5% and 45%) respectively, experienced high intensity of the emotion mad to the topic of conflict but only for a short duration.

(ii) Towards the Participant

The combination of the negative affect experienced towards the participant (see Figure-2) indicates that young children experienced high intensity of these emotions and for a short duration (51.7%). However, older children experienced low intensity of these emotions and for a short duration (53.4%). Therefore the intensity of the emotion mad decreased with age and remained only for a short time for both ages.

FIGURE-2 *Mean Percentage of Responses Towards the Participant: Combined Negative Affect "Mad, Scared and Sad"*



When each negative emotion experienced towards the participant is viewed more closely a different trend is found on each. Figure-3 indicates that 51.7% of young children and 82.9% of old children experienced low intensity of the emotion sad and for a short duration. Whereas, in Figure-4 63.4% of young children and 57.9% of old children experienced high intensity of the emotion mad and for a short duration. On the emotion

scared (see Figure-5) 58.8% of the young children experienced high intensity and short duration contrasted to 70.0% of the old children experiencing low intensity and short duration. Overall, young children experienced low intensity of the emotion sad, high intensity of mad and scared and short duration of each. Old children experienced low intensity of the emotions sad, scared and high intensity of mad and short duration of each. Therefore, the difference between the two age groups lies within the emotion scared. Young children felt high intensity and old children felt low intensity. This result is understandable as the younger children are more likely to fear their older counterparts more so than the older children. It is interesting to note that the difference between the two emotions sad and mad lie within the intensities. For both age groups mad is experienced more intensely than sad.

FIGURE-3 *Mean Percentage of Responses Towards the Participant: Emotion "Sad"*

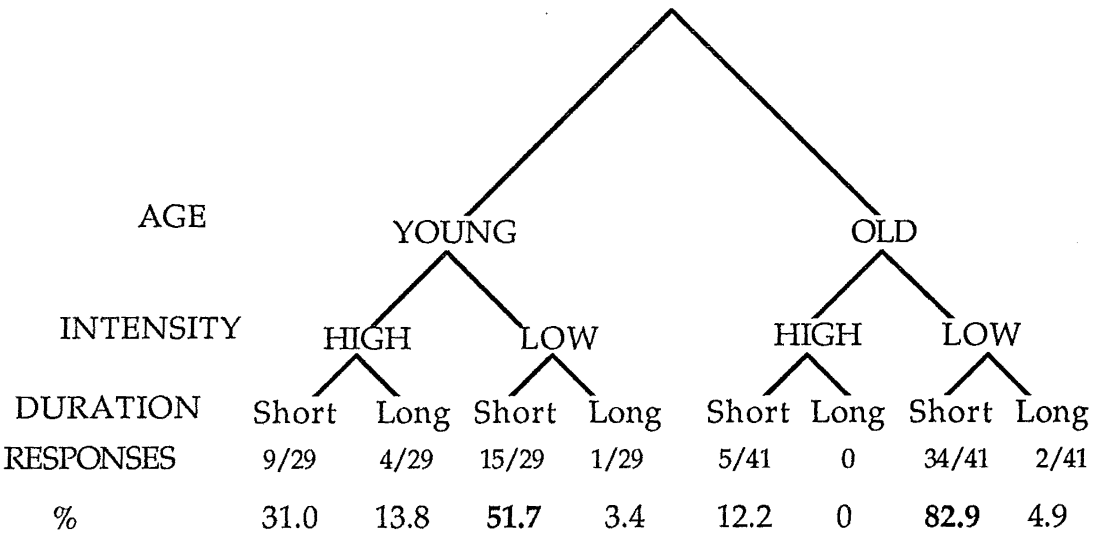


FIGURE-4 *Mean Percentage of Responses Towards the Participant: Emotion "Mad"*

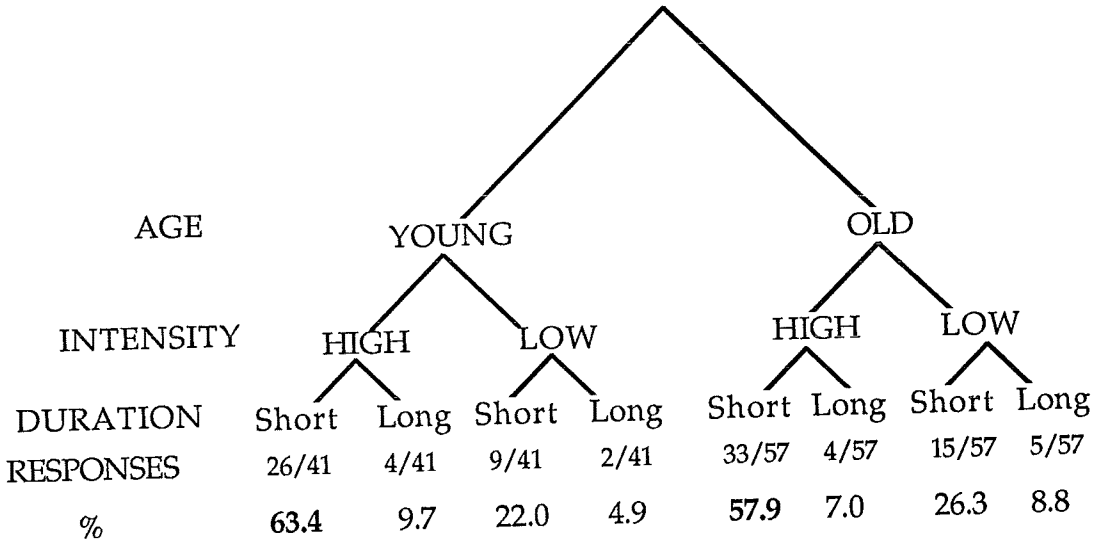
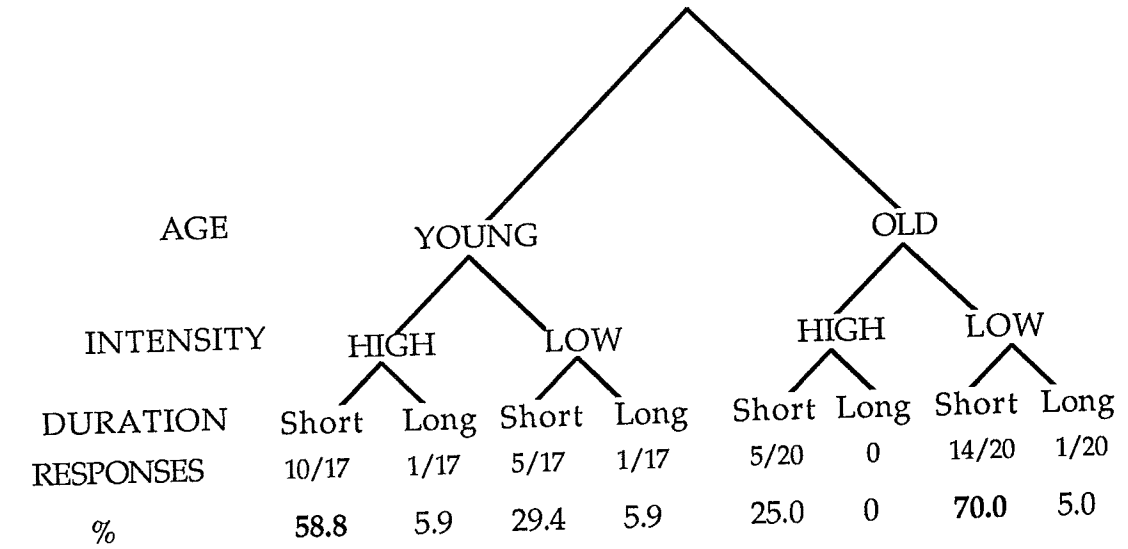


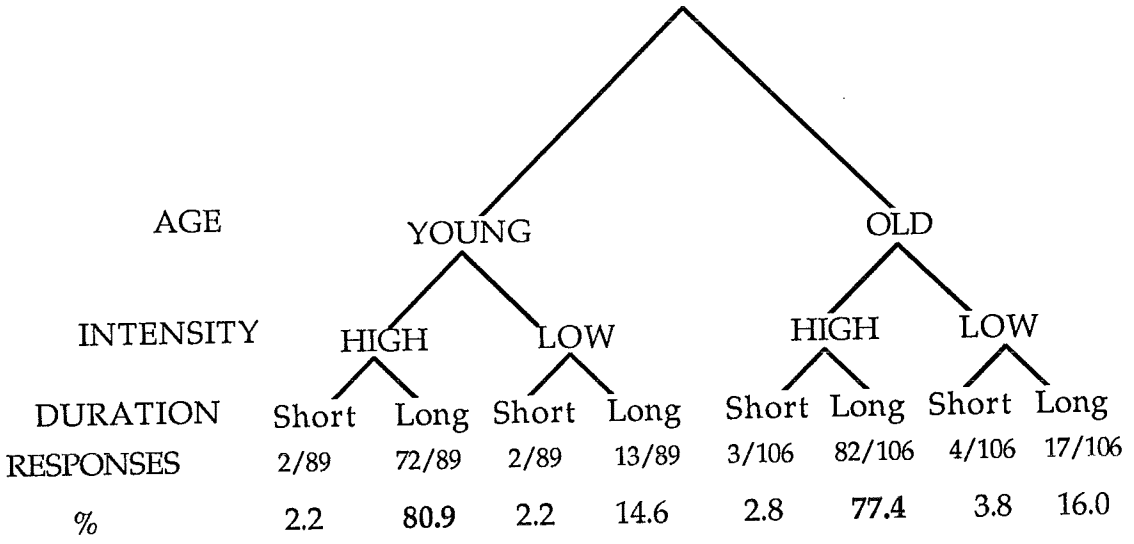
FIGURE-5 *Mean Percentage of Responses Towards the Participant: Emotion "Scared"*



(iii) At the End of Conflict

The majority of both young and old children (80.9% and 77.4%) respectively experienced high intensity of the emotion glad at the end of conflict and for a short duration (see Figure-6).

FIGURE-6 *Mean Percentage of Responses at the End of Conflict: Emotion "Glad"*



Simultaneity of Emotions

The number of emotions both young and old children experienced was investigated within the topic of conflict, towards the participant and at the end of conflict.

(i) Topic of Conflict

FIGURE-7 *Percentage of Children Who Responded With One, Two or Three Emotions to the Topic of Conflict*

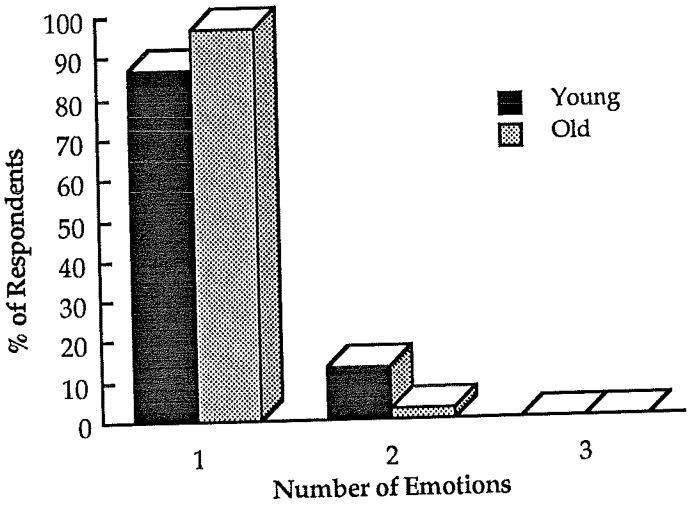


Figure-7 illustrates that significantly more older children (97.8%) compared to younger (88.0%) responded with only one emotion to the topic of conflict ($z = -2.930$, $p<.01$). Hence significantly more younger children (8.6%) compared to older (2.0%) responded with two emotions ($z = 2.515$ $p<.05$).

(ii) Towards the Participant

FIGURE-8 *Percentage of Children Who Responded With One, Two or Three Emotions Towards the Other Participant.*

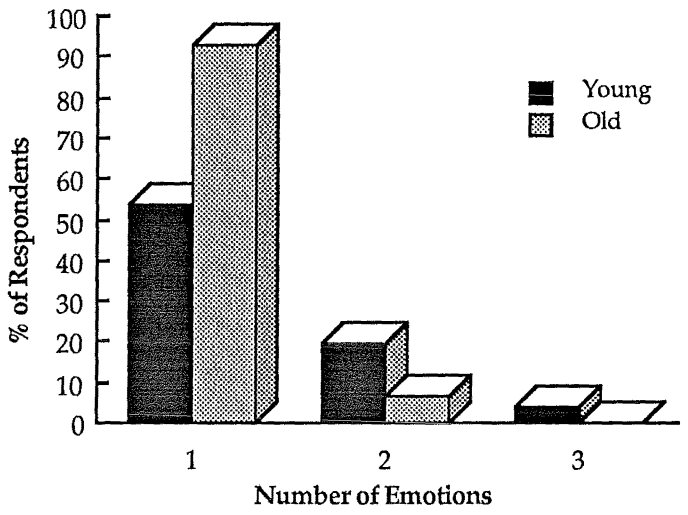


Figure-8 illustrates that significantly more older children (92.7%) compared to younger (53.6%) responded with only one emotion towards the other participant ($z = -7.29$, $p<.001$). Hence, significantly more younger children (19.5%) compared to older (6.5%) responded with two emotions ($z = 3.581$, $p<.01$).

(iii) At the End of Conflict

FIGURE-9 *Percentage of Children Who Responded With One, Two or Three Emotions at the End of Conflict.*

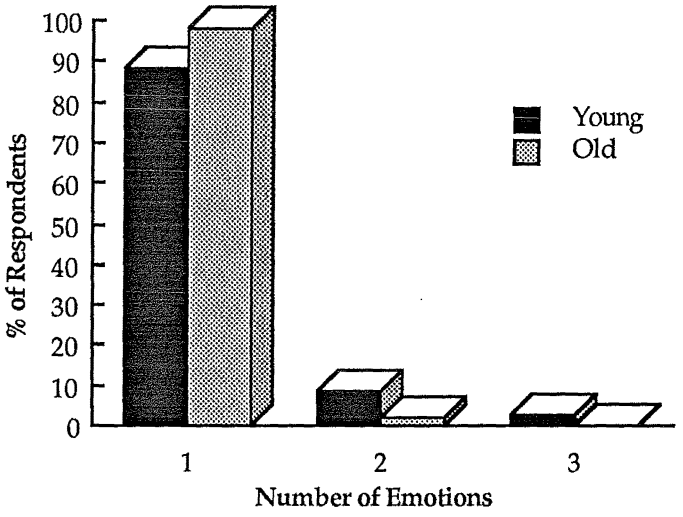


Figure-9 illustrates that significantly more older children (97.0%) compared to younger (86.9%) responded with only one emotion at the end of conflict ($z = -3.368$, $p<.01$). Hence, significantly more younger children (13%) compared to older (2.85%) responded with two emotions ($z = 3.581$, $p<.01$).

Overall, more young children compared to older responded with more than one emotion during and at the end of conflict. Further, in figure-8, a higher number of emotions was experienced by both the young and old children compared to figure-7 and figure-9. Hence, young and old children felt a more complex array of emotions towards the other person during conflict compared to the other two areas investigated.

Intensity of Two or More Emotional Responses

TABLE-8 *Mean Percentage of Responses that were of High, Low, High/Low Intensity on Two or More Emotional Responses.*

CONFLICT	AGE	INTENSITY		
		LOW	HIGH	LOW/HIGH
During Conflict				
(i) Topic of Conflict	Young	_	25.0 (4/16)	75.0 (12/16)
	Old	33.3 (1/3)	33.3 (1/3)	33.3 (1/3)
(ii) Towards Participant	Young	28.1 (9/32)	31.3 (10/32)	41.0 (13/32)
	Old	40.0 (4/10)	20.0 (2/10)	40.0 (4/10)
End of Conflict	Young	33.3 (6/18)	39.0 (7/18)	28.0 (5/18)
	Old	100.0 (4/4)	_	_

Table-8. The majority of young children (75%) who felt two or more negative emotions towards the topic of conflict experienced a combination of high/low intensities. The intensities of the emotions expressed towards the topic of conflict by older children were evenly distributed across the three levels of intensity. With regards to the negative emotions experienced towards the other participant, both low, high and low/high combination of intensities were cited by young children. However, a majority (80%) of the older children experienced a combination of low and high/low intensities. The intensities of the emotions experienced by young children at the end of conflict were evenly distributed across the three levels of intensities. The few older children who responded with two or more emotions experienced low intensity.

Overall, when both young and old children experienced two or more emotions there appears to be a decrease in the intensity of each emotion. Very few children experienced feeling high intensity of each of the emotions.

General Findings

The results of this study indicate that a large majority of both young and old children did not know why they wanted to hide their emotion from the other person during conflict. However, of those who responded, young children feared verbal reprisal if they expressed their feelings and did not want to place further stress on the other persons feelings. Whereas, the older children feared social reprisal, for example, being called a 'scaredy cat' if they expressed their emotion. However, on the emotion mad, older children were less inhibited in their expression. At the end of conflict, the majority of both the young and old children were happy because the conflict had stopped.

It was found that the more intense an emotion did not necessarily mean it was related to a mood. Overall the majority of the negative responses were of high intensity however, there was a general decrease in intensity with age (with the exception of emotion 'scared' for old children, who were perhaps less afraid of their counterpart, and the emotion 'sad'). These high intense emotions only lasted for a short duration. With regards to the positive emotion glad, the responses were of high intensity and long duration.

In contrast to Harter's (1986) analysis, this study indicates that more young children compared to older children responded with more than one emotion during and at the end of conflict. Both young and old children felt

a wider range of emotions towards the other person compared to the topic of conflict and when the conflict was over. When two or more emotions were expressed the intensity of each decreased, that is, not all of the emotions were each of high intensity.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The literature to date has revealed that children as participants in conflict reveal an impressive degree of knowledge about social rules, strategies, issues, tactics and behaviours. Researchers are thus beginning to gain a comprehensive view of the nature of disputes. The present study provides further detail on the affective nature of conflicts and aims to contribute more to an understanding of emotional development within children. The emotional nature of conflicts can be generally characterized by high intense emotions that do not remain at high intensities for very long, that is, children quickly recover from their disputes. A more complex array of emotions were felt towards the other participant than towards the issue of conflict and at the end of conflict. Children preferred not to express their negative emotions during conflict and also had difficulty in explaining why they did not want to express their emotion. The level of reasoning between the two ages varied in relation to emotion expression. The interpretation and implication of the findings will further be discussed and the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will be presented.

The research findings will be presented in terms of emotion expression, intensity and duration of emotion and simultaneity of emotion.

Emotion Expression and Inhibition

During the course of development, children acquire a sense of when not express their feelings (Saarni 1979). This knowledge can be considered

as "unspoken but tacit norms that govern the degree and manner of concealment of our emotions in particular circumstances" (Malatesta 1982 p. 3). Malatesta has stressed that because "emotions can have both extremely positive and extremely negative consequences for individuals as well as social relationships, there is great personal and social press to bring feelings under control" (p. 2). The present study illustrates the strong social and personal processes at work, as a high percentage of young and old children preferred not to express the negative emotion they felt towards the other participant.

Previous research has shown that according to 6 to 10 year olds, most reasons for emotion dissimulation are to avoid trouble and preserve self-esteem (Saarni 1979). The present analysis indicates that a large majority of both young and old children did not know why they wanted to hide their feelings from the other participant. Of those children who could give a reason, there appeared with age a significant change in the reasoning behind emotion expression or dissimulation. The younger children were afraid to further exacerbate the other's feelings and feared verbal reprisal, whereas social conformance was more important to the older children. Hence, the younger children were concerned with personal reprisal and the older children with social reprisal. With age, children were more inhibited in expressing emotion with the exception of anger. Both young and old children expressed happiness at the end of conflict because the conflict had been resolved. There were however, different reasons behind the expression of gladness at the end of conflict. Younger children expressed gladness because the physical and verbal abuse had terminated, whereas the older children were pleased because a personal gain resulted from the outcome of the dispute. Overall, both young and old children did not want to verbalize or show their negative emotion towards the other participant, but were able to show or verbalize positive emotion at the end of conflict.

Rotenberg, Mars & Crick's (1987-1988) research on children's sadness found that according to children's reports, children infrequently verbalize their emotions of sadness to others and frequently do not show their sadness at all. This is in concordance with the present study. Also, when children do show their sadness they show it in the form of physical expression such as 'moping around'. An implication of this, noted by Rotenberg et al, is the tendency for children as well as the family to show poor mental health, which may be due to lack of children's verbalization of their emotions. It appears that parents and clinicians are in the position of having to infer the children's emotional state from the children's physical expression. If a person's childhood was characterized by a strong emphasis on hiding feelings, it has been reported (for example, Malatesta 1982) that these people as adults still greatly inhibit the expression of their emotion and also experience a great deal of anxiety. Malatesta has found that the opposite relationship holds for persons who experienced little emphasis on hiding their feelings.

Ribordy, Camras, Stefani & Spaccarelli (1988) have created vignettes describing emotion eliciting situations that would be appropriate for use in emotion recognition research or affective therapy programs with children. Often clinical work with children concentrates on developing children's abilities to verbalize feelings and to empathize with others. The emotion vignettes can be utilized to stimulate discussion and provide a structured, non-threatening means by which discussing sensitive feelings can begin and also encouraging the verbalization of negative affect and exploring ways children could deal with this constructively. In particular, conflicts are very powerful situations where children feel threatened as the relationship with the significant other becomes tenuous and calls for emotion dissimulation so to reduce further interpersonal friction or serve personal reasons.

The regulation of emotion (that is, the control of emotional experience and expression of self and others) has often not been considered at all or has been conceptualized as a natural sequence to cognitive development and, thus, not in need of separate investigation (Campos, Campos & Barrett 1989). It is vital for future research to further the understanding of the regulation of emotion and question how children come to acquire this knowledge. How do children learn the cultural and familial rules governing the expression of emotion? How do the rules change with age? Malatesta (1982) proposes that the processes involved in emotion socialization are modelling of facial expressions, verbal instructions, tone of the voice and observational learning where children imitate and copy others all through childhood. "In addition to observational learning, children receive differential attention to their own emotional expressions depending on the personalities of their parents and significant others" (Malatesta 1982 p. 21). Malatesta suggests that both verbal and non-verbal social influences are very much a part of the control of overt emotional expressions in adults. It is likely that the regulation of emotion in adults contains more elements of consciousness and intentionally than is the case with children. As suggested by Campos, Campos & Barrett (1989) the orientation person/environment transactions, rather than cognitive prerequisites, become the centre for studying the development of emotion regulation.

Intensity and Duration of Emotion

The findings from this study revealed no relationship between intensity and duration of emotion. That is, the more intense an emotion did not necessarily mean it was more likely to be related to (or to become) an emotional mood.

The results indicate that generally the intensity of negative emotions experienced during conflict decreased with age. Both young and old children experienced short duration of negative emotions during conflict and long duration of positive emotion at the end of conflict. As with Dawe's (1934) research, children in this study recovered quickly from their disputes as a majority of them were expressing the emotion gladness at the end of conflict. While there was a decrease with age in the intensity of negative emotion felt towards the participant during conflict, of the three emotions investigated (mad, sad and scared) sad was the only emotion that both age groups responded to with low intensity.

Rotenberg's (1985) investigation into the causes, intensity, motives and consequences of children's anger found that children at different ages (6 years through to 12 years) reported similar intensities of anger. Rotenberg however, did not report the level of intensity. The present research also found similar intensities of anger. That is, both the young and old children felt high intensity although, the intensity did decrease with age towards the topic of conflict.

Simultaneity of Emotions

There appears to be a decrease with age in the number of emotions children expressed towards the topic of conflict, towards the participant and at the end of conflict. While a large majority of both young and old children responded with only one emotion across the different target areas of conflict, there were significantly more younger children choosing two or more emotions. It is difficult to judge however, the reliability of this result. One interpretation could be that younger children were unsure about how they might feel and when each emotion was presented to them they could not choose any one in particular, hence they chose two or three. A second

interpretation could be that the younger children were more willing to say how they felt than the older children. Perhaps the older children were more inhibited. Harter (1986) proposed that children pass through developmental levels in order to appreciate the fact that one can experience two emotions at the same time. Harter suggests that depending on the age or cognitive level of the child, he or she will ascribe two feelings directed towards the same target, for example, the object, situation or person. Alternatively, the two feelings might be directed toward different targets, for example, the first emotion is directed to the situation and the second emotion is directed to the person. The design of the present study meant the target areas within conflict had already been distinguished. Each child reported more than one emotion throughout the conflict episode. Hence children did ascribe differing emotions to the different target areas as well as reporting more than one emotion within each target area. Overall, the results indicate that children do report feeling two or more emotions towards the same target. However, we do not know if each emotion occurs simultaneously or in temporal order. When the children experienced two or more emotions there appeared to be a decrease in intensity of each. Very few children experienced feeling high intensity of each of the emotions. This would then suggest that the children experienced the emotions in temporal order. The negative/positive valence dimension was not investigated. Hence no results can be formulated regarding children accepting the fact that they can experience a negative and a positive emotion at the same time.

An interesting trend observed was within the target dimension 'towards the other participant'. Significantly more younger children compared to older children reported two or more emotions. The younger child felt a more complex array of emotions towards the other person. This indicates how significant others are powerful sources or causes of young children's emotions. As Harter (1986) has suggested it may well be that the

understanding of multiple emotions caused by significant others, lags behind one's understanding of emotions provoked by events or situations. Thus suggesting that there are important motivational or dynamic factors involved in addition to cognitive-structural dimensions.

Limitations

The self-report nature of the research limits some of the conclusions which can be drawn from the present study. It may have been difficult for children to bring their feelings out into the open, particularly with an unknown experimenter interviewing them. As Yarrow (1979) has stated "Not only are there inhibitions to verbalizing intimate feelings but our language is often inadequate to communicate subtleties of feelings" (p. 952).

In many instances the interviewing lasted longer than 20-25 minutes as a large number of the younger children chose multiple emotions. It was felt that that the length of the interviews was going beyond the children's concentration span. It would be recommended in the future to shorten the interviewing time, concentrating on only one conflict situation per interview. This would enable in-depth questioning for example, using open-ended questions that would also take into account individual differences.

It is possible that many of the subjects could be experiencing intense family conflicts everyday, however, at a more serious level. Thus the family situation should be taken into account in the interpretation of the results. It may be necessary in future studies to obtain data on the background of each subject before pursuing this type of research. Future research could be directed towards an investigation that compares the emotional nature and the coping strategies employed by children experiencing intense conflicts at home with those who live in a harmonious family environment.

It is possible that the children in the present study may not have experienced the conflicts within the three vignettes. Hence, they would have difficulty explaining how they might feel in that situation, particularly expressing the intensity dimension. It can be argued that a procedure involving children remembering and producing situations (for example the method employed by Rotenberg 1985 & Rotenberg etal 1987-1988) would overcome this limitation, however, there are also problems with the validity of this self-report (for example, production deficiency Flavell 1977). One strategy that research could adopt in future would be to use observational data in conjunction with the interview data. A comparison could then be made and would serve to strengthen confidence in the interview method.

Future Research

The current study raises several issues which could be explored in future research. One important direction is the development of emotion regulation. In particular, a focus on the person/environment transactions. Research to date has tended to rely heavily on children's cognitive level in determining children's emotional responding. The current results have demonstrated the complexity of the emotions felt in the transactions between the persons involved in conflict as opposed to the emotions felt within the situation and event domains. An understanding of the important role significant others play in conflicts and the effect this has on children's emotional development has yet to be explored. It would be profitable also to explore how children come to acquire the knowledge and rules for emotion regulation.

It was noted that a large majority of children in the present study reported feeling two or more emotions within each target dimension. Because of the limitations of the interviewing situation no substantial conclusions can be drawn from the present study regarding the simultaneity or temporal order of emotional responding. It would be beneficial for future research to explore this area and endeavour to further explain the simultaneity of emotion. For example, Lewis and Michalson (1983) have proposed that the first emotion identified reflects societies expectations, whereas the emotions identified later may have personal meaning to the subject.

It may be speculated that children experiencing continual conflict may have developed strategies that helps them to cope, or alternatively severely impede their emotional development. As noted by Hesse & Cicchetti (1982), the theoretical consequences of investigations of normal emotional development may highlight the need to construct a model of 'normal' emotional development in order to distinguish between abnormal and well-adjusted emotional development. "Knowing the processes used for normal emotional development will allow us to derive training procedures for children expressing abnormalities in their emotional development" (Hesse & Cicchetti 1982 p. 35). Therefore research directed towards the investigation of the emotional responses of children experiencing intense conflicts compared to those who live in a harmonious environment will lead towards a more full comprehensive view of emotional development and provide an insight into practical therapy programs for children, thereby encouraging the crucial need for verbalization of negative affect for personal and family health.

Conclusions

This study explored children's views of their emotions when involved in family disputes. The majority of 6 and 10 year olds reported how they would feel in a conflict situation. However most children had difficulty explaining why they would or would not display a particular emotion. Family conflicts of the nature investigated can be characterized by short intense negative emotions during conflict and long intense positive emotions following conflict. Children expressed more emotions and had more difficulty explaining their reasons towards the target dimension 'the other participant' than towards the issue of conflict or when the conflict had been resolved. The pressures exerted by significant others within conflict situations have been found to have a powerful effect on the young child's emotional responding. This is an area of research that requires further study (for example, following the recommendations suggested by Harter 1986 & Campos etal 1989). Thus, the present study has provided a tentative outline of the emotional nature of conflict situations and suggests both theoretical and practical implications. Future research should be directed towards a more full comprehensive theory of emotional development by further investigating the importance of emotion regulation and children's strategies in coping emotionally within conflict situations. Parallel to this, is the importance of practical applications, that is, the use of vignettes (for example, Ribordy etal 1988) in affective therapy programs in an attempt to help children verbalize negative affect and develop in an emotionally healthy way.

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